occasion was for the benefit of God's people at the present time.

13 Proceeding with the examination of the priests, Haggai the prophet of God said: "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean." (Vs. 13) This proves that there is no inherent value possessed by the creature that can be brought to the Creator. Those who are now of the priestly order in the church were creatures once "dead in trespasses and sins" and "were by nature children of wrath, even as others", and therefore by nature unclean. When one becomes the follower of Christ, instead of being able to make anything or everything holy unto the Lord by his "wonderful character" or other merit of his own, the very opposite is true to the facts. Being naturally dead and in a defiled condition the creature would defile everything of the Lord that he touches were it not for the fact that his justification and approval by Jehovah is granted by and through the merit of Christ Jesus. How foolish and unreasonable, then, for one to think that he could develop a beautiful and sweet character which is meritorious and acceptable before the Lord as something holy. The one who takes such a course denies the blood of Christ that bought him and the results therefrom. The answer of the priests before Haggai was a correct answer and shows that our self-development is not what is acceptable to the Lord as being a holy thing. Works of self-achievement are "dead works" and are, in the estimation of the Lord, defiled and unclean. It is the merit of Christ that cleanses, and our whole-hearted and complete devotion to the Lord is the evidence of our love for him, and this is what brings his approval.

14 God approves those whose affections are set upon him and who proceed in a manner consistent therewith. He does not approve those who set their affections on things of the earth or creatures of the earth. If the admiration or affection of a professed Christian is centered upon man, be that man self or some other man, such could not be pleasing to the Lord. Regardless of how good and devoted to Jehovah any man might be, and how greatly he is used by Jehovah, that is no excuse or justification for another to give praise and adoration and glory to the creature; and he who does so does it at his own peril. If we divide our affections between God and things of this world we are thus touching unclean things and are thereby defiled. We cannot serve two masters and be pleasing to either. Especially is that true with one who claims to serve God. He must be wholly devoted to the Lord in order to please him.

15 The priests having answered, "It shall be unclean," then answered Haggai and said: "So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean." (Vs. 14) This must mean that the creature is of himself unclean before the Lord, so that anything he touches "it shall be unclean" because contrary to the Lord's commandment. For what reason unclean? is properly asked. Manifestly because of inactivity in the service of the Lord as the Lord has commanded, and doing work in a contrary way. For sixteen years those Jews, although given the great favor by the Lord to work on the temple, had neglected to do the work, and therefore no work done or performed by them could be pleasing or acceptable to God as holy. It was work on the temple they had been directed to do and had been sent to Jerusalem to do. There was nothing else that could be pleasing to the Lord.

16 It was even so with the people of God on earth when the time arrived for the building up of Zion and gathering God's people together. Isaiah pictures the Lord's saints on earth at that time. Isaiah, as for the people of God on earth, recognizing his uncleanness, cried out: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." (Isa. 6:5) Everything of the world was dead, particularly from and after 1914, because there the King of glory took his power and reigned and Satan's world had ended and the time had come to go up to God's organization which is Zion. It was in 1919 and thereafter that the people of God realized that they had been negligent in performing their duties, and therefore of unclean lips, in this, that they had not been diligent in proclaiming the praises of the Lord. Then they awoke and began to work.

17 Isaiah pictures this same class appreciating the fact that the anger of the Lord toward them had ceased, and he therefore wrote: "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." (Isa. 12:1, 2) There was reason to expect the increased blessings of the Lord upon his people from the time that they awoke and became active and zealous. Then it was that 'they turned from their dead works to serve the living God' and went about doing the work in connection with the temple and hence had reason to expect and to receive the continued blessings of the Lord.—Heb. 9:14.

18 The prophet then names a day certain from which time forward or upward the remnant should expect the blessings from God: "And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord." (Vs. 15) Manifestly the meaning is that from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month they were to consider and call to mind what conditions obtained or existed before the temple work was begun and to compare such with what would take place from then